

2012 OPEN SEASON OF THE EXPANDED PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATES PROGRAM (EPAP):PART ONE - WRITING TEST

1. SUMMARY:

The Department is pleased to announce the 2012 Open Season of the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP). This is a continuation of the 2008-2011 program announced in reftels. There are two parts to the application process: 1) a Business Writing Test; and 2) the application package submission. Registration for the Business Writing Test begins January 4, 2012, and the deadline for completing the Business Writing Test is January 27, 2012. Application packages will be accepted February 6-27, 2012. Please read this cable carefully as there have been some changes in the program application process. This cable provides an overview of the program and explains procedures for the first part of the process, which is taking the Business Writing Test. The second part of the application process, submitting application packages, will be the subject of a separate cable.

2. PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

During this open season of the Expanded Professional Associates (EPAP) Program, Appointment Eligible Family Members (AEFMs) are able to apply for EPAP positions opening "Now" and "Summer 2012." (Note: This is not the annual Hard-to-Fill Program. Civil Service employees are not eligible to apply for these EPAP positions. EPAP positions have been created for AEFMs.) Only those persons who meet the definition of an appointment eligible family member (as defined in 3 FAM 7120 and 3 FAM 8112) of a career government employee from any agency under Chief of Mission Authority can apply to take the Business Writing Test, a prerequisite for applying to the EPAP program.

3. TESTING PERIOD:

- a. Registration for the ACT Business Writing Test begins on January 4, 2012. Registration for the test closes on January 24, 2012. All applicants must complete a Business Writing Test by January 27, 2012.
- b. Only those applicants who pass the Business Writing Test are eligible to submit an application package. If you passed the test previously anytime between October 2008 and January 2011, your score is still valid and you do not need to re-take the test.

4. HOW TO REQUEST A BUSINESS WRITING TEST:

- a. Individuals who took and passed the Business Writing Test between October 2008 and January 2011 do NOT need to take the test again. However, they should send an email to the ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov email box indicating when the test was taken and when they were advised by HR/CDA that they passed.
- b. Individuals who have not taken and passed the Business Writing Test previously must request registration for the test no later than January 24, 2012 in order to allow sufficient time to meet the testing deadline of January 27, 2012. Please send an email request to the ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov email box located in the Global Address List (GAL).
- c. The email should be titled "Request ACT registration (name of applicant)." The email must contain:

1. Applicant's full name
 2. Applicant's best email address
 3. Sponsoring employee's name
 4. Agency testing location (domestic or overseas; if overseas, name of post)
 5. Any special accommodations needed for applicant.
- d. If the applicant is testing overseas, the email must also contain the name of post's Human Resources Officer and the name and email address of post American official designated by the HRO to proctor the test.
- e. Once HR/CDA receives a request for registration and verifies the applicant's eligibility for the program, HR/CDA will create an applicant record for the individual with ACT.

--If the applicant will be testing domestically, ACT will send him/her an email outlining scheduling procedures. The applicant will then be able to log onto ACT's website and schedule an appointment for a proctored test at a domestic ACT Center.

--If the applicant will be testing overseas, ACT will send the designated proctor an email with detailed proctoring instructions, including a logon ID to access ACT's testing website. The proctor will need to arrange a convenient date and time with the applicant to give the test.

5. TESTING INFORMATION:

- a. The test must be proctored.

--Applicants who are currently in the United States may complete their proctored Business Writing Test at ACT Centers located throughout the United States.

ACT Center Locator: <http://www.act.org/actcenters/locate/index.html>).

--For applicants overseas, Human Resources Officers at post will be responsible for proctoring writing tests or for designating another American officer at post to do so. The proctor must be a US citizen.

- b. The exam will be taken electronically, via the Internet. The Department has contracted with ACT, Inc., which will provide electronic exam delivery and scoring. The exam will test applicants' writing skills by presenting them with a common workplace situation and asking them to write a response addressing the situation. The test evaluates a variety of writing components, to include sentence structure, mechanics, grammar, word usage, tone and word choice, organization and focus, and development of ideas. It requires standard business English, defined as writing that is direct, courteous, grammatically correct, and not overly casual.
- c. System Requirements for Overseas Testing: To complete the writing exam, an applicant must have access to a computer with Internet access and a steady power supply. Posts which lack a steady power supply or have only dial-up Internet connection may experience difficulty administering the exam; if this is the case please contact the program administrator at ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov as soon as possible so that other arrangements may be made.

- d. If a proctor has trouble accessing the ACT website, refer to the FAQ on the HR website for the Expanded Professional Associate program:
<http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/RecruitmentStaffingEmployment/Recruitment/Pages/ExpandedProfessionalAssociateProgram.aspx>
- e. The ACT website will list specific browser settings and other technical requirements. It is not necessary that access to other websites be restricted on the testing computer; rather, it will be the proctor's responsibility to monitor website usage.
- f. If an applicant is retaking the Business Writing Test, the request for registration must be under the same name as used when the original test was taken. If you do not pass the Business Writing Test during this Open Season you must wait until the following Open Season to re-take the test.

6. TEST RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS:

- a. Scores will be reported by ACT directly to HR/CDA, not to the applicant. Applicants will be advised by HR/CDA, by email, whether or not they have passed the test. Applicants who do not pass the Business Writing Test will not be eligible for further consideration this season.
- b. Once an applicant has been advised by HR/CDA that he or she has passed the Business Writing Test, the applicant may submit the full application package to ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov. Full details on the application package will be provided in a separate cable. Applications must be submitted no later than February 27, 2012; any applications received after that date will not be considered.
- c. For more information about the content of the Business Writing Test, please see Ref B.
- d. For questions concerning the testing process, eligibility, etc., please send an email to ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov

2012 OPEN SEASON OF THE EXPANDED PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATES PROGRAM (EPAP): PART TWO - APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. SUMMARY:

The Department is pleased to announce the 2012 Open Season of the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP). This is the second cable of a two-part series on the EPAP program (see Ref. E for part one details). The deadline for completing the Business Writing Test is January 27, 2012. The deadline for applying to the Program is February 26, 2012.

Please read this cable carefully as there have been some changes in the program application process. This cable provides an overview of the program and explains application procedures for the second part of the process which is submitting the application.

If you have taken and passed the Business Writing Test anytime between October 2008 and January 2011, you do not/need to retake the Business Writing Test. Similarly, you do not/need to reapply for the program if you applied previously and were found qualified in the areas you indicated an interest in at the time of your original application. If you wish to apply for positions in an area for which you were not qualified previously, you must apply. See paragraph 4(b) of this cable.

2. PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

- a. During this open season of the Expanded Professional Associates (EPAP) Program, Appointment Eligible Family Members (AEFMs) are able to apply for EPAP positions opening Now and in Summer 2012. (Note: This is not the annual hard-to-fill program. Civil Service employees are not eligible to apply for these positions. These are EPAP positions which have been created for AEFMs.) Only those persons who meet the definition of an appointment eligible family member can apply to the program.
- b. An EPAP AEFM may only be employed at the same city as his/her sponsoring employee. An AEFM whose sponsoring employee does not yet have an onward assignment for Summer 2012 may apply for the program by identifying a specific professional category or categories, but without identifying a specific position; however, an AEFM may only be offered an EPAP position after his/her sponsoring employee has been paneled to a position at the same mission. AEFMs already present at post may also apply for a position provided that the sponsoring employee's tour of duty is at least one year beyond the EFM's hiring date.
- c. Not all the positions being advertised will be filled. More positions are advertised than authorized in order to give maximum flexibility to both applicants and bureaus in seeking good matches for the positions. Final hiring decisions will be made by each regional bureau based on the number and qualifications of applicants, and bureau staffing priorities.
- d. EPAP includes the following categories of positions: Political, Economic (includes ESTH positions), Public Diplomacy, Management, General Services, Human Resources, Financial Management, Office Management, Information Management, Physician, Nurse Practitioner and Registered Nurse. All EPAP positions are at the FS-04 to FS-07 grade level.

- e. Further information, including a list of the positions available for 2012, the EPAP cover form, Evaluation Standards, Position Descriptions, FAQs and Salary Standards, is available at: <http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/RecruitmentStaffingEmployment/Recruitment/Pages/ExpandedProfessionalAssociateProgram.aspx>

3. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

In order to be eligible for the Expanded Professional Associates Program, applicants must be:

- a. An Appointment Eligible Family Member (AEFM), as defined in 3 FAM 7120 and 3 FAM 8212, of a career government employee from any agency under Chief of Mission authority currently or soon to be assigned to a full-time position at an overseas post.
- b. An AEFM is:
 - (1) A U.S. citizen; and
 - (2) the spouse or domestic partner (as defined in 3 FAM 1600) of the sponsoring employee, or a child of the sponsoring employee, who is unmarried and at least 18 years old; and
 - (3) listed on the travel orders or approved Form OF-126 of a sponsoring employee, i.e., a direct-hire Foreign Service, Civil Service, or uniformed services member who is permanently assigned to or stationed abroad at a U.S. mission, or at an office of the American Institute in Taiwan, and who is under Chief of Mission authority; and
 - (4) resides at the sponsoring employee's post of assignment abroad at a U.S. mission, or, as appropriate, at an office of the American Institute in Taiwan; and
 - (5) does not receive a U.S. Government retirement annuity or pension from a career in the U.S. Foreign Service or Civil Service.
- c. Other family members or dependents of direct-hire Foreign Service, Civil Service, or uniformed service employees who are on travel orders or on an approved Form OF-126 who do not meet all of the criteria above are not AEFMs for purposes of 3 FAM 8200.
- d. Same-Sex Domestic Partners must comply with the provisions of 3 FAM 1612, including the filing of the Affidavit of Eligibility for Benefits and Obligations (DS 7669), available at: <http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/EmployeeRelations/SameSexDomesticPartners/Pages/default.aspx>
- e. Applicants do not need to have a current security clearance at the time of application (see paragraph 7(a) below), but would need to obtain one before a final hiring decision can be made. The tour of duty of the family member's sponsor must be one year beyond the EFM's hiring date, not the date of the conditional offer. If the EFM cannot obtain the required clearance within the one-year timeframe, the offer of employment is rescinded.
- f. Family members of contractors are not eligible to apply. Members of the Civil Service who are not AEFMs also are not eligible to apply.
 - (1) All applicants must pass a Business Writing Test in order to qualify for any position in the program (see Ref. E). In addition, applicants must meet the established specific qualification standards for each position as determined by a Qualification Evaluation Panel (QEP) convened by HR/CDA. These standards are posted on the CDA website at:

<http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/RecruitmentStaffingEmployment/Recruitment/Pages/ExpandedProfessionalAssociateProgram.aspx> (go to the link for "Qualification Evaluation Panel Procedures").

- (2) Applicants must commit to serving a minimum of one year in the position for which they are applying. Those who are already at the post where the EPAP position is being advertised must have at least one year remaining on their sponsoring employee's tour of duty from the EFM's hiring date, to apply for any position in the program. Applicants may apply for EPAP positions which are open now and through Summer 2012.
- (3) Applicants may be able to serve up to the maximum of their sponsoring employee's tour of duty, provided there is sufficient funding available, the bureau wishes to renew the position, and the employee's supervisor documents their performance as satisfactory or better. As with any limited non-career appointment, there is an absolute maximum term of five years.

4. APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND DEADLINES:

- a. There are two steps to apply for the program:
- b. Step 1 - complete and pass an online Business Writing Test. See Ref. E for instructions on taking the Writing Test. Writing tests must be completed by January 27, 2012.
- c. Step 2 - submit a completed application package to HR/CDA, per the instructions below, by February 27, 2012.
- b. Individuals who applied in any previous EPAP season and were found eligible by the QEP, but were not hired, do not/need to reapply or retake the Business Writing Test. However, they must reconfirm their interest in an EPAP position by advising, in writing, the hiring bureaus (see paragraph 11 for contact information) and HR/CDA (ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov). Further they must forward an updated SF-1950 application for employment if their work history has changed or the SF-1950 application for employment they submitted originally.
- c. Individuals who did not pass the writing test in the past are welcome to retake the writing test. If they are notified by HR/CDA/EL that they passed the writing test, they may resubmit a complete application package by the application deadline. Individuals who passed the Business Writing Test but were found ineligible by the QEP for specific positions should not reapply for the same type of positions unless their qualifications have changed. We encourage applicants to be realistic about what they may be qualified for and only apply for those positions.
- d. Applications should be scanned and sent electronically as a PDF file to ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov. Submit only the requested materials. Any submission that is longer than 20 pages or that does not contain the requested information will not be considered. The following materials must be included in the submission and must be submitted in the following order:
 - (1) Professional Associates Program application cover sheet in the format required is posted on the HR/EPAP web page at:
<http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/RecruitmentStaffingEmployment/Recruitment/Pages/E>

[xpandedProfessionalAssociateProgram.aspx](#) (Go to the link for "Professional Associates Program Application Form.")

- (2) A signed and dated letter of interest explaining why the applicant is interested in the position(s) and why s/he feels qualified to carry out the job duties. The letter must include the following language: "I am applying for a position within the Expanded Professional Associates Program. My sponsoring employee, (name), is currently assigned to (post) until (month/year) and (if relevant) plans to bid/has bid on positions at (list posts) which open in (season/year). If I am selected for a position in the Expanded PA Program, I commit to serve in the position for a minimum of one year. I acknowledge that all leave requests must be approved by my supervisor."
 - (3) DS-1950, Application for Employment. Available on the Intranet or the internet at: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/ips/>
 - (4) College or University transcripts.
 - (5) Evidence of citizenship (copy of passport biographic page, birth certificate, or naturalization certificate).
 - (6) Copy of first page of sponsoring employee's travel orders or assignment notification showing applicant listed as EFM.
- e. Foreign Education Provision: Foreign education transcripts are no longer accepted. Foreign education must be accredited by an accrediting institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education in order to be credited towards qualification. Applicants can verify accreditation at the following website:
http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg6.html#NationallyRecognized
- f. The application deadline is February 27, 2012. Applicants will be vetted by HR/CDA and notified whether they meet the minimum qualifications for a category of position available under the Expanded Professional Associates Program. Qualification for a position does not guarantee an offer of employment. Offers of employment may be made thereafter, but only after the sponsoring employee has been paneled to a position at the same city. As noted above, AEFMs already present at post also may apply, provided that their sponsoring employee's tour of duty will extend at least one year beyond the EFM's start date.

5. EXPECTATIONS OF SELECTED APPLICANTS:

- a. Positions offered within the Expanded PA Program are professional-level, full-time positions. Only applicants who are interested in full-time, all-year employment should apply. Selected applicants may request accrued annual leave during the summer months and holiday periods. LWOP of up to 90 days may be granted as follows: LWOP for less than 80 hours may be approved by supervisors at post; LWOP of more than 80 hrs, but less than 30 days may also be approved at post, but a formal personnel action is required. LWOP of 30- 90 days must be approved by the regional bureaus and a personnel action is required. If an EPAP employee takes LWOP, the position may not be filled temporarily. LWOP in excess of 90 days is not authorized.

- b. All leave requests must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor at post. EPAP AEFMs will be evaluated annually using form JF-57, Performance Appraisal for AEFMs.

6. SELECTION PROCESS:

- a. HR/CDA will convene a Qualification Evaluation Panel (QEP) to review submitted applications of candidates who pass the writing test. The QEP will evaluate each candidate as either qualified or not qualified for each category of position for which s/he is applying. The QEP will forward the applications of qualified applicants to all of the geographic bureaus. The QEP will also send each applicant electronic written notification of the results of their review. Applicants are encouraged to refer to the Standard Operating Procedures for QEPs for this program, posted on the HR webpage for the EPAP Program. This information is located at:
<http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/RecruitmentStaffingEmployment/Recruitment/Pages/ExpandedProfessionalAssociateProgram.aspx> (go to the link for "Qualification Evaluation Panel Procedures").
- b. Regional bureaus will make all final hiring and salary decisions. However, bureaus are not authorized to offer a position to a candidate until after the sponsoring employee has been paneled or it is verified that the sponsoring employee has a tour of duty that will permit the applicant to serve a full year. Applicants should bear in mind that not all positions advertised will be filled, as explained above. Veteran preference will be applied in the selection process, consistent with the application of veteran preference in all overseas employment, as documented by HR/OE.

7. UPON SELECTION:

- a. Selected applicants are required to obtain a Top Secret security clearance for the position by the time of their appointment. Those who do not hold active security clearances must inform the regional bureau or post Human Resources Office promptly after their selection. The post or hiring bureau will initiate the clearance process with Diplomatic Security but will require prompt cooperation and input from the candidate. The candidate may not be brought on board until s/he has received a Top Secret clearance. As with any EFM overseas, EPAP AEFMs must be medically cleared for post. Applicants are reminded to update their medical clearances in a timely manner.
- b. EPAP AEFMs will be hired using the Family Member Appointment(FMA) mechanism. The regulations governing FMAs are contained in 3 FAM 7120; these regulations may be obtained via the State Department Intranet, or via the Internet at:
<http://www.state.gov/m/a/ips/>.

8. SALARY, BENEFITS, AND ALLOWANCES:

- a. Salary will be determined at the time an offer of employment is made. It will be determined by a bureau HR Specialist based on the advertised grade of the position and the individual's educational background and work experience. The regional bureau's Family Member Employment (FME) Coordinator is responsible for authorizing the highest previous rate (HPR), if applicable. An AEFM that is hired under the Expanded Professional Associate Program, will receive the FS Comparability pay as a "Direct-hire." An individual may not be paid at a grade higher than the advertised grade of the position which s/he will encumber.

The Bureau Coordinator may offer the position at the Training Level and the incumbent would be able to convert to the Full Performance level after successfully completing 52-weeks at the Training Level.

Applicants may review detailed salary standards for each position and grade within this program on the HR/CDA website at:

<http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/RecruitmentStaffingEmployment/Recruitment/Pages/ExpandedProfessionalAssociateProgram.aspx> (go to the link for "Salary Standards").

- b. EPAP AEFMs will accrue leave at the same rate as direct-hire employees. EPAP AEFMs will be able to pay into the Thrift Savings Plan, FEGLI, and FEHB, as well as FERS. They may also be eligible to receive Executive Order 12721 Eligibility after 52 weeks of government service. EPAP AEFMs can receive over-time pay but it must be paid out of post funds and must be requested and authorized in accordance with post procedures.
- c. EPAP AEFMs are personally eligible to receive danger pay but no other allowances, differentials, or other benefits (including but not limited to post differential, temporary lodging, living quarters, transfer, home service transfer, education, and separate maintenance allowances, advances of pay, home leave, and rest and recuperation). They will not be granted any entitlements, such as shipment of household goods or housing, in addition to those already granted to their sponsoring employee. EPAP AEFMs at unaccompanied posts must be included on their sponsoring employee's travel orders and may not accept Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA) once they have commenced travel to post.
- d. Please note that if you are currently in a civil service position, your appointment will be converted to a Family Member Appointment.

9. TRAINING:

- a. AEFMs hired under this program will be expected to take any related training courses at their own expense. However if an AEFM is hired and already working and a post wishes to fund travel for an AEFM to take a course at FSI, salary will continue to be paid during the training period. If an employee has been selected for a position but has not yet gone to post, salary will not be paid during the training period. Training should be planned in conjunction with R&R or home leave travel when possible. Applicants should contact bureaus directly for information on recommended training for advertised positions.
- b. Some positions advertised may indicate a required or preferred language skill. Language training will continue to be provided to EFM's on a space-available basis only. Individuals selected for this program will generally have priority over other EFM's for language and functional training enrollment, but there is no guarantee that space will be available. Applicants should contact the Family Liaison Office (FLO) at FLOASKTraining@state.gov for more information regarding training enrollments.

10. AVAILABLE POSITIONS:

- a. A list of EPAP positions is available on the HR website:
<http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/RecruitmentStaffingEmployment/Recruitment/Pages/ExpandedProfessionalAssociateProgram.aspx> (go to the link for "Open Season Available Positions, Updated Copy").

- b. This position list will be updated weekly and incorporate any changes that are made. These positions will not be advertised or bid upon via HR Online/FSBID since these are not FS positions.

11. CONTACT INFORMATION:

- a. If you have questions regarding specific positions, please contact the respective regional bureau HR representative:

AF/EX: Njeri Moore (MooreNG@state.gov)
AF/EX: Theresa Crawford (CrawfordTA@state.gov)
EAP/EX: Cynthia Coriell (CoriellCL@state.gov)
EUR/IO/EX: Dane Ferguson (FergusonDC@state.gov)
EUR/IO/EX: Elzbieta Hogan (HoganE@state.gov)
NEA/SCA/EX: Maura Forno (FornoM@state.gov)
NEA/SCA/EX: Carleen Kaurin (KaurinCG2@state.gov)
WHA/EX: Jeanette Hantke (HantkeJA@state.gov)

- b. For questions concerning the application process, eligibility, etc., please send an email to ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov. You will receive an "Out of Office" message but the mailbox is monitored daily.